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VINDICIÆ LANDAVENSES:

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STRICTURES

ON THE
Richard Watson
BISHOP OF LANDAFF'S

LATE CHARGE,

IN A

LETTER TO HIS LORDSHIP.

Τὸν δ' ἀπαριθόμενῷ προσέφη —
Κλῦθι μεν —

O X F O R D:

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S T R I C T U R E S, &c.

MY LORD,

To differ in essentials from the elegant and liberal Bishop of Landaff; to think it a duty to controvert his opinions, and to expose the fallacy and danger of his reasoning, must give pain to every mind that respects science, talents, and virtue. These, my Lord, are yours; and base should I be, to tarnish or conceal their real lustre. Your tomb will be hung with unfading wreaths, which your own hands have wove;—why should one Iurid plant have found admission into the garland? The vanity of being singular may affect little minds: yours ought to be superior to its influence. The station in which you are placed renders you conspicuous and honoured;—why use sinister attempts at popularity with a party, when you might be revered by all?

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Raised

Raised by Providence as a ruler and guardian of a Church you profess to support ; — why point out any little flaw you may suspect in the fabric to the attention of enemies, who wish to demolish the whole ? Is not this deserting your station, and betraying your trust : or do you invite danger, that you may display courage in repelling it ? The sentiments you have lately promulgated will not fail of their effect. They have already made you regarded as the champion of the Dissenters, whose blandishments I hope you had not the ambition to court. They have given real pain to your friends, and the friends of the Church of England in general, who while they admire your genius, blame your indiscretion.

This, my Lord, has induced me to offer some Strictures on your Charge, which I trust flow from a spirit as liberal and as Christian as yours. If I should offer any argument, unpleasant to your ear, forgive me this wrong ; — for truth alone actuates me. If I fail in that proper respect and deference, which I feel so justly your due, impute it to the error of the head, not the intention of the heart. You are the friend of free inquiry : — inquiry provokes discussion ; and while candour guides the pen, the opposition of conviction is neither a mark of enmity or illiberality.

You begin, my Lord, with the French Revolution ; and if that were a subject for a CHARGE ; or had been introduced as a caution against the danger of sudden changes, as far as concerns politics, I should have agreed with you. That Liberty is infinitely preferable to Despotism ; but that

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the Despotism of many, whether Democratic or Aristocratic is worse than that of an individual Monarch, will easily be conceived. What may be the final issue of this Revolution "unparalleled in the annals of the world," God only knows. As a sincere friend to *rational* Liberty, I pray with you, that the blessing France aspires to may be attained and secured in its utmost purity. But, my Lord, glorying in the name of a Briton, in which all my attachments centre, I feel no partial interest in her success or miscarriage. I leave this to the wisdom of that nation whom alone it concerns, and to that superintending PROVIDENCE, who directs every thing for the best. I equally reprobate the ungenerous aim of Mr. Burke in gilding the iron mask that veiled the features of Despotism, and the unbounded licence of those who answer or refute his ill-timed and injudicious Reflections. He wantonly committed the two nations by invidious comparisons, and sowed the seeds of discussion, which have sprung up and grown, by *diligent* cultivation, into a plentiful crop of dangerous poisons. An inconsiderate friend, my Lord, is worse than an open enemy. May not this apply to your Lordship too? What Burke has been to the State, are not you to the Church?

For my part, I am shocked at the impiety (I cannot give it a softer name) of some who enjoying all the sweets of real, not chimerical, Liberty themselves, wish for the re-establishment of Despotism in France; and would exult to see that kingdom plunged in carnage and blood, that one man, or the minions of one man, may have more power to do mischief;

when self-interest will prompt the NATION to invest him with all the necessary power of doing good. I am shocked too at that vanity which would level all ranks, and obliterate all distinctions; which confounds the plan of PROVIDENCE it pretends to illustrate; and which from taking a partial view of NATURE that equals all men at last, rashly and falsely anticipates her decree, and forejudges her doom. It seems to me indeed that the Republic of PLATO, and the *Utopia* of MORE are no longer visionary: they may be considered as practical forms of Government compared to that of France; which is founded on a theory that experience only can confirm or refute; but which opinion must decide against. I have only farther to observe, that the nation which concerns itself least with the internal regulations of another, shews the most wisdom, and the most Justice. We are reaping every advantage from the intestine broils and the unsettled State of our once great rival. A generous way of thinking and acting will certainly prevent us from fomenting her disorders; but policy surely will leave it for others to compose them. These are my sentiments, delivered with less reserve than yours.

But, my Lord, you mentioned the Civil State of regenerated France only to introduce the Ecclesiastical. I think them co-relative, and co-existent: they will stand or fall together. The same principle is conspicuous in both; and had we, my Lord, hopes or wishes for preferment thers, we would unquestionably bewail the degraded Gallican Church. That a decent provision, according to situation and circum-

stances,

stances, should be made for the Clergy of every Church, who will deny? That no one ought to be subjected to the stings of poverty, who is qualified to support the professional character, or be tempted by abundance to indulge in excesses that disgrace it, I admit. That the necessity of pluralities and non-residence may be done away in this country, is devoutly to be wished; and may your Lordship live to see this object you seem to have at heart, and exert your talents to effect it. I, with thousands, will bless you. But, my Lord, I would not be even a Bishop in any country where it is necessary to depend on popular caprice: for what man of learning or goodness would practise those arts which secure a popular election; and without those arts, he would seldom succeed.

I will not deny, because I have not sufficient vouchers, that the Gallic Church is still comparatively richer than ours; and the National Assembly have at least applied the superfluity to more patriotic purposes than our *pious* reformer HENRY, who stript ours to dissipate among his favourites, and left the Clergy and the Nation much greater reason to lament his profusion than to venerate his zeal. Yet, my Lord, we have the becoming gradations of the Clerical Order left; that *concordia discors*, which constitutes the harmony and perfection of our Church and State; preferment sufficient to animate the best endeavours of the most learned to deserve it; and Hope, from the stability of our possessions, to support those who seem the farthest removed from the prospects of patronage:

In the suppression of Monasteries, constituted as they were, we cannot disagree. That “they are suited to the gloomy apprehensions of enthusiasts, and to the base views of hypocrites,” is in general extremely just. I cannot indeed help smiling at the folly of that man, who, if he is a Protestant, can sit down at the close of the eighteenth century to write a panegyric in their praise. Yet, my Lord, we ought not to argue against the use of any thing, merely from its abuse. At a certain time of life, when disappointment may have soured enjoyment, and fortune may have denied the means of a respectable separate establishment; when we have lost the friends we love, and hold sublunary concerns by a loosened tie; does not the Cloister open the prospect of relief, and would it not afford an asylum at once soothing and satisfactory? I see no reason, indeed, why institutions for those purposes, are more incompatible with the spirit of Protestantism than of Popery.

But, my Lord, we have hitherto been arguing in a circle: let us now get to the central point for which it is evident you introduced the œconomy of the Gallic Church; “that complete Toleration which it holds out to all mankind in concerns of Religion.” Hence you remark, “that the alliance between Church and State is not in France supposed to be so intimate, that danger must be apprehended by the State, unless Church-men alone are eligible to all civil offices. Men who neither celebrate the Mass, nor pray to the Virgin Mary, or invoke saints, or worship images, or practice auricular confession, or believe in transubstantiation, or

fear

fear the pains of purgatory, or conform either in faith or worship to the doctrines and rights of the established Church; these men are not excluded in France from the rights of Citizenship on account of their religious opinions."

—All this sounds well, my Lord! It is liberal, it is exalted! It shews the progress of philosophy: of that philosophy, which outstripping Christianity, disregards all past maxims and evidences; which despises the accumulated wisdom of ages, telling us it is only an accumulation of error; and in order to find the truth, at once reverses all that has been said, done, or believed before. But, my Lord, we will candidly examine this specious independence of the Church on the State. In what does it consist? Has the State assigned the Clergy fixed and permanent revenues beyond the power of re-assumption? Has it passed a decree, which like that of the Medes and the Persians alters not, that the Clergy are to enjoy their allotted boon, whatever religious or political creed they may hold? No.—So strict is the alliance between the Church and the State, even in this boasted Land of Liberty, that repeated oaths can scarcely satisfy the latter of the fidelity of the former. The constitutional Clergy alone can hold benefices; and even they, by the precarious tenure of the pleasure or stability of the nation. Thus France, whose present rulers are evidently too regardless of all religion, shews the necessity of having some ecclesiastical constitution, some barrier against the irruption of sectaries, some security from the conflict of contrary opinions.

But

But it seems, my Lord, men who are not Catholics, who, in fact, are Protestants, Deists, Atheists, or what not, enjoy the right of Citizenship *there*. Surely, you will not deny they are allowed the same privilege *here*. I have not heard that we have had any trials of Heretics or Unbelievers; or that a good man has been persecuted on account of his religious persuasion, provided he did not disturb the happiness or security of others.* In most cases our Toleration is now complete. It is more than Toleration: it is an Establishment in which full liberty of conscience is allowed. The liberal indulgence lately extended to the Catholics leaves little else that can be asked by reasonable beings, on the score of civil or religious freedom. And shame on that man, who would wish to cramp the enjoyment, or circumscribe the sphere of either! Shame on that man too, whether Churchman or Dissenter, who prostitutes the sacred name of Liberty to purposes of Faction, who promotes Anarchy for his own private gratification or aggrandizement, and weakens the bands of that society which nature or choice has bound him to confirm!

The Constitution of every well regulated country, whether Christian, Mahometan, or Pagan, requires, and we find it generally observed,† that power should be delegated to those only who can give unequivocal proofs of their fidelity to that

* That ebullition of party zeal, which to the scandal of all religion, was carried to such a disgraceful pitch at Birmingham, I will neither attempt to palliate or account for. Let oblivion throw its veil over what Christianity must condemn!

† If any contrary conclusions can be drawn from France, let it be observed that France is only making experiments, and *felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum.*

Constitution: "Thou art a Christian and believest that Jesus Christ was sent from God, and that there is no other name by which men can be saved; — go and profess this thy belief at Pekin or Constantinople, and being there spurned with contempt, and excluded from all civil trust and authority for not admitting the divine missions of Confucius or Mahomet, think whether thou wilt not have reason to accuse the ruling powers in those immense empires of injustice." Can your Lordship be in earnest? Would a disciple of Mahomet or Confucius be weak enough to accuse a Christian government of injustice for not admitting him into offices of power and trust; and has a disciple of Christ any reason to be offended, were he mad enough to urge his claim, at meeting a repulse from the Emperor of China or the Sultan of Turkey?

If I can at all understand you, my Lord, your doctrine nearly amounts to a community of rights and privileges, not in one society only, but from one end of the earth to the other. That all men are brethren, that they should treat one another with kindness and benevolence, that the errors of ignorance or of education are not only to be pardoned but endured, are principles which nature undepraved would dictate and enforce; but in performing the relative and social duties, in promoting the general happiness of the community to which we more particularly belong, in guarding our own Rights from violation, while we infringe not on the Rights of others, lies, in my opinion, the grand and important obligation of Men in all countries, and of all religions.

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In the true spirit of Christianity, my Lord, do you profess, " that we ought to have no other head but Christ, no other rule of faith but his word." Yet in the Apostolic age we find one said I am of Paul, another of Apollos. The different sects which have persecuted one another from the introduction of Christianity to the present day, have certainly done it much disservice; but while the pride of directing the public opinion, and of being distinguished as a leader rather than a pattern, actuates so many, what reformation can be expected? Happily for us, my Lord, we belong to a Church that requires nothing to be believed as an article of faith, which is not read in scripture, or may be proved thereby; and the scripture in every page informs us, that mild forbearance and brotherly love is due to all. But though as Christians we are to embrace our fellow Christians and all mankind in the bonds of peace, we are not enjoined to disregard our own peace and security, or to gratify the unreasonable pride and ambition of man or any body of men, who are evidently more inflamed with the love of mammon than of God.

Christ, our spiritual head, has declared that his kingdom is not of this world. The Author of our religion did not encourage opposition to power; because all power is of God. He did not speak ill of magistrates; because they are the terror of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. The Gospel, my Lord, you well know was promulgated by Christ and his Apostles in countries where the rulers were in general ignorant of, or did not acknowledge even the ex-

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istence of a true God: yet we never find them attempting to demolish the form of Government, or trying to weaken civil relations, or to share in the emoluments of office.

I do not think it will be said in any enlightened Christian country " that it is the duty of the civil magistrate to discourage all opinions in religion which are opposite to established ones." Every man ought to serve God, according to the dictates of his own heart, without insult or persecution. But I think it the duty of the magistrate, my Lord, to discourage all attempts at innovating on the Constitution of his country, when that Constitution has been proved both by theory and experience to be most excellent. I am one of those who believe, that though the Church may exist independent of the State, and the State of the Church, it is nevertheless for the happiness of those nations where they are united on principles that clog or injure neither, but mutually tend to beautify and invigorate both. Such is their alliance in this country:; and such may it ever remain !

Much ingenuity of learning has been exhausted to prove that this alliance cannot be broken, without imminent danger to both ; but it seems, my Lord, " it has never convinced you." I have not therefore the vanity to attempt it. Logical deductions and metaphysical distinctions serve only to confound a plain subject. I will therefore, my Lord, with your leave, present you with a familiar illustration of my way of thinking. Every good Government has a Constitution ; you admit we have one : every society has some rules of conduct, some regulations which apply to all and bind all,

for the good of all : every petty club has its articles and its officers : every family its domestic œconomy and its head. Now allowing that each of those States holds out some advantages to its members, (and interest or protection I conceive is the basis of all civil conventions) is any person justified in expecting those advantages who either cannot or will not conform to the laws by which he knows they are to be distributed ; or can he justly deem himself persecuted in having them withheld ? Surely not ! Government, my Lord, is a kind of public deposit, on which we can reasonably draw as far as we contribute, and no farther. All are entitled to protection, and to Liberty founded on law ; but the prizes it holds forth to encourage emulation and desert, would like the prizes of Fortune be blindly distributed, if conferred on those who cannot give the best testimony of fidelity and allegiance to the entire principle on which it is founded.

This, my Lord, is my way of arguing on the *justice* of excluding Dissenters from civil offices : it most probably will fail of conviction on you, as yours has on me.*

* I must do your Lordship the justice to say, that you have candidly stated an objection to your own way of arguing, which objection seems to me much stronger than all the contrary arguments you have used. It may be as well said, that five is more than fifteen, as that the majority of persons constituting a civil society have not a just right, for the public safety, to prescribe what civil privileges can be allowed the minority. If this right is invalidated, there is an end of all regular Government.

I cannot think with you, my Lord, that the day is not far distant when that which the House of Commons hath refused to acknowledge to be a debt of justice due to the Dissenters, will be conceded to them as a boon from the State, as a pledge of brotherly love from the liberality of the Church ; but I cordially unite with you in hoping that all moderate men (whether Churchmen or Dissenters) will exert their influence in abating the violence, in removing the bitterness, and in calming the irritation which has unhappily been excited in the minds of many individuals on both sides.

Now

Now for the *policy* of the measure. Like an able advocate, my Lord, you urge every argument that can conduce to the support of your client's cause. You first make a demand on our justice; and then attempt to prove it is for our interest to grant what is asked. "The Dissenters," you tell us, "are a numerous body, but divided into different sects, which have as much objection to each other as any of them have to the Church; that if we wish to keep the various denominations of Dissenters disjoined, we should remove from them every cause of combining their strength; and if we wish to mix them with the mass of citizens, we should remove from them every ground of distinction." That the Dissenters are divided into many different and discordant sects is true; but their uniform conduct shews they are all united in one common principle, which nothing could eradicate,—in inveteracy against the Church. In spite of false delicacy and affected candour, this is their bond of union: a union which can be broken only by the firm but temperate resistance of the Church and State.* We have already seen the beneficial effect of this resistance;—and with the generous, victory is enough;—to triumph is unmanly. Then why, my Lord, should you give occasion to renew hostility? Why should you invite the vanquished to another attack,

* In time, as their demagogues drop off, and the fallacy of the ground on which their dissent is founded, becomes more apparent, there is reason to believe that some of the sects will die away, or melt into the Church. The Methodists are already falling to pieces by the loss of their author and conductor. The turbulence of their leaders will soon sicken other sects; and if the Church would be true to itself, it would soon have few enemies; and it certainly deserves none.

when

when the victors, though they dread no defeat, are more solicitous to heal the wounds they were compelled to inflict than to probe them anew. It seems,

Victrix causa Deis placuit, sed victa Catoni. *Lucan.*

The Dissenters will be grateful to the champion who rallies their discomfited bands, and inspires them with fresh hope. The liberal sentiments of the Bishop of Landaff will be the theme of every pen, and the praise of every tongue. But as mankind feel disappointment in proportion to the expectation they have formed, is it kind, my Lord, to raise that expectation too high, which you are not ignorant must experience a defeat?

I believe with you, my Lord, that *now*, as well as in the days of Charles II. there are Dissenters, "full of zeal for the peace of the Church and State; and neither enemies of episcopacy or liturgy."* There are among them men, who not only do honour to their religion, but to human nature itself; men, in whose just praise, panegyric would halt, and language fail. It is not only a HOWARD or a THORNTON, whose glorious course is lately run, they have to boast: there are among them living patterns of every virtue that the breast of man can enfold; but do we find them mingling with the partizans of confusion, or leaguing with the caballers for place? No! Happy in the full enjoyment of religious freedom; happy in the civil protection afforded them in common

* Charles in his declaration from Breda, speaks thus of Presbyterian Ministers. To the few of that denomination now existing in England, your brother of St. David's does merited justice in his Disquisitions.

with other subjects by the State, they keep the even tenor of their way; and wish for no change, but a change to immortality and glory!

That man is too great a bigot to do credit to any religion who disputes your "fundamental truth, that no society of Christians whatever, or however distinguished by rank, power, wealth, numbers, learning, can have the least claim to any just authority of compelling others by threats, or calumnies, or penalties of any kind to a fellowship of worship." Even the Dissenters, my Lord, are scarcely so uncandid as to insinuate such a Charge against the Church;—and can you? Is not this raising the cry of intolerance? how unjustly! against the Church of which you are a ruler, and consequently against yourself. To employ threats, calumnies, or penalties,* against those who differ from us in religious opinions would not only be an injustice to man, but an insult to that God whom we all pretend to worship; who is no doubt pleased with the variety he permits, and sees no heresy in that heart which serves him with love, and obeys him through principle.

You profess, my Lord, "you have a mind neither hostile to the doctrines of the Church of England, nor attached to them with such a blind and implicit reverence as to reprobate every discussion of them." If the rulers of the Church in general, and they are distinguished for liberality, piety,

* If it is wished to insinuate, that an incapacity to hold civil offices is a penalty, the term is misapplied. Between *paying a penalty*, and *not receiving a gift*, the distinction is sufficiently obvious.

and

and learning, think it possible, without wounding the spirit, to widen the basis of our ecclesiastical Constitution, why do you not urge on the work? If the *Service*, without injuring essentials, can be better accommodated to the various views and prejudices of mankind, and leave less room for cavil, while the doctrine is equally pure, the reform would be no less conducive to the glory of God than the harmony of men; but are injurious innuendoes and *public* discussions likely to promote those great ends? Let reason answer. We have received no new revelation from heaven. Even the ingenuity of man can produce little more by way of illustration or argument. The form may be varied, according to circumstances; but the substance will ever remain the same. I, my Lord, am not such a zealot for forms once established,* as to imagine that any length of time can sanctify error, or that what human wisdom has arranged, may not by progressive wisdom be re-modelled and even improved: nor am I weak enough to wish that what with all its fancied imperfections has been found to answer so well in practice, should be submitted to the repairs of every speculative workman, or adapted to the taste of every distempered imagination.

Who but must lament with you, my Lord, "that the gospel of Christ has been polluted by the craft of men; and

* Pardon me, my Lord, when you say "that had no change been admitted in the tenets of a Church established by law, we might have at this day been occupied with the Druids in cutting mistletoe, or *with the Catholics in transubstantiating flour and water into the substance of God*,"—I feel an impropriety in the language you have used, and think your usual liberality has forsaken you in the severity of the reflection.

has suffered this pollution from the earliest ages of the Church to the present times." How remove this most effectually? By the integrity of our own lives; not by idle "inquiries after truth," while we neglect to practise her most obvious and essential dogmas.

"Statesmen in general, and you are sorry to add too many Churchmen, are enemies to free inquiry."* That they are enemies to wild theory and enthusiastic zeal; that they are in general too enlightened not to see the folly of the one and the danger of the other, is a compliment I will not refuse them, and which your reflection pays them more than a thousand unmeaning encomiums.

That Churchman, my Lord, must have a shallow comprehension of the human heart, who knows not to what lengths fanaticism may carry a weak though honest mind, when free to pursue its visionary views; who knows not that on such minds the designing villain and the artful hypocrite generally play to promote their respective purposes. That Statesman, my Lord, whose penetrating eye surveys and connects the relations of the most distant nations, whose soul is warmed with true glory, and raised above little views, will despise the interested advice of party; conduct the vessel of State according to the established rules of navigation; and leave to petty experimentalists the full fruition of their *sublime* discoveries, their *ingenious* inventions, and *beneficial*

* The note your Lordship subjoins ^{p. 10} fixes a particular application, where the sentiment might otherwise have been supposed to have had a general one. Thus artifice often defeats its own purpose; and the head betrays what the heart wishes to conceal.

improvements.* The Infidel however will rejoice to find that you rank Statesmen with himself; he will quote with rapture the opinion of the Bishop of Landaff, as applied to them; that they believe "all religions are but State contrivances to assist the impotency, and to enlarge the extent of human laws."

"The divine doctrines of our holy Religion want not the aid of human laws for their support." True,—real Religion is seated in the heart, and beyond the cognizance of laws; but on this subject I have already avowed my sentiments: I repeat them in substance; that it is for the happiness and glory of any country where the pure precepts of Christianity are interwoven with the very existence of the State. Remove those two grand pillars, the Test and Corporation Acts, against which all the batteries of our enemies are pointed; and if I may judge from the spirit of the times, at once the mighty, the venerable fabric, the work of ages, and the admiration of the world tumbles to the ground. On the ruins some edifice, some form of Government, though of diminished splendor, might be erected; but Religion, lovely Religion, would shine no more. Stript of her decent ornaments, and despoiled of her intrinsic beauties, she would degenerate to monastic austerity, or wanton with a looseness disgraceful of her divine original. What is she now in France but
 A Harlot, loveless, joyless, unendear'd.

* What would be thought of the physician, who knowing his patient to be in perfect health, and likely to continue, would bleed and physic by way of experiment to render that health *better* which was already the *best*? The application is easy.

And

And now, my Lord, having fallen in company by accident, diverged in the course of our journey according to what seemed the best road to each of us, we meet, we embrace, I hope, in the spirit of charity at last. "To endeavour to secure the protection of God in another world, by propagating the pure gospel of his Son in this," is and ought to be our grand aim, our unwearied pursuit. But while we study to propagate its mild and benevolent principles, let us not forget to enforce their practice by our example. Let us banish anger and evil-speaking, and study peace with all men ; assured that one breach of the great law of Love is of more importance in the sight of God than a thousand speculative errors which disturb not the quiet of others, or a thousand speculative truths which have no influence on ourselves.

T H E E N D.

